CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE NINE HUNDRED AND THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 30 May 2002, at 10.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Hubert de La Fortelle (France)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I call to order the 903rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like, at the outset, to make some brief introductory comments on the occasion of France's assumption of the presidency of the Conference.

I would like first of all to take stock of the situation in which our Conference finds itself. I will then endeavour to list the causes for the current paralysis of our forum and, finally, I will give you some brief indications as to the intentions of the French presidency.

Before going to the heart of the matter, I should like first of all to thank all my predecessors who have successively occupied this post since the beginning of the 2002 session. The Egyptian Chargé d'affaires, Mr. Mohamed Tawfik, Ambassador Fisseha Yimer Aboye of Ethiopia and my colleague and friend Markku Reimaa, who has just passed the baton to me. Mr. Reimaa has done remarkable work in all respects: everything that could possibly have been tried has, in all probability, been undertaken both by him and by his predecessors. That, therefore, is my assessment of the situation.

The disarmament process is continuing. This can be seen in the recent and very impressive signing by the United States and the Russian Federation of a new treaty for the reduction of their strategic nuclear arsenals, which represents an important and positive step forward.

At the same time, it is no secret that the situation in this forum is hardly encouraging. Indeed, the problem we face is a double one and this raises the temptation to find ways of bypassing the Conference. This double problem is to be found, first of all, in the path of negotiation. What is too obvious often passes unnoticed or, as Saint-Exupéry puts it, the essential is invisible to the eye and people are loath to look closely at things that seem self-evident. The compromise formulae on the programme of work drafted by successive presidents since 1999 have all come to naught. In our current context the path of negotiation regrettably - but I hope only provisionally - appears to have led to an impasse.

The second problem relates to the path of dialogue. Experience accumulated by the previous presidency would seem to indicate that the so-called path of dialogue or discussion which could in the end lead to one or several rounds of negotiation does not seem to be acceptable to all. If neither of these paths leads anywhere, we will be faced with the temptation to bypass the Conference.

The more the Conference is touted as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, as stated in paragraph 120 of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on disarmament, the more it is in fact bypassed. One after another of the issues which by rights should be dealt with in this forum either elude it or run the risk of eluding it, as if impelled by an irresistible centrifugal force. So are we doomed to failure? We do not believe so. What then are the causes of this situation? They clearly lie

(The President)

outside our forum. Although it is not my intention as President to analyse the current strategic environment, I would simply say that, more than in any other area of international relations, multilateral disarmament is directly dependent on day-to-day developments in the field of international security.

The profound strategic changes which we have been witnessing over the last few years are creating new uncertainties as to the conditions for future global balances. In this connection, even if the underlying reasons for these uncertainties should not blind us to numerous positive developments, the situation still does not seem particularly propitious for the emergence of an international consensus on the next stages to be followed in the multilateral disarmament process. Yet, such a consensus is indispensable for the relaunching of useful and substantive work by the Conference on Disarmament. Nothing could be further from the truth than to blame our present difficulties on some sort of ill will or lack of creativity on the part of the Geneva delegations. Quite the contrary: numerous paths have been explored since the beginning of the 1999 session in an attempt to break the deadlock; regrettably all to no avail.

Under the circumstances, it is clearly vital for us to preserve the Conference as an instrument for multilateral disarmament, an instrument which, without any doubt, will one day find itself in a better situation, provided we do not yield to the temptation of recreating elsewhere facilities that we already have here.

What then are the aims of the French presidency? They are clear and, I hope, a priori, limited, but are broadly contingent on ideas that might emerge from my consultations. My first aim is to continue consultations and continue to listen to delegations, to all delegations. I certainly do not intend - and this goes without saying - to start from scratch. We have already made some progress, we have a common heritage, to use the recent wording by the Ambassador of Chile, a common heritage that consists of official or unofficial proposals by my predecessors in this post.

Nor am I forgetting the most recent proposals, put forward by Ambassador Reimaa. I shall keep in mind this heritage as I continue the intensive consultations that I launched at the beginning of the week and which I shall be pursuing with all delegations in a spirit of total transparency. To disregard this indispensable foundation would be an unpardonable mistake. My second aim is to ensure that I do not discard any path that might prove promising.

From what I have said, it follows that I have no preconditions, no set ideas in terms of the task which faces me over the next four weeks. I will be listening to all of your proposals and suggestions, I will consult with you on those which appear to me to have promise and which might meet with broad approval. I undertake to keep you regularly informed, in particular every Thursday at our plenary meetings, but also in other forums, as to the state of progress of my consultations and to share with you my thoughts so as to ensure that there is no lack of clarity about the intentions of your President.

I am of course not forgetting the very useful work of the three special coordinators on questions of procedure, which, like my predecessors, I will continue fully to support.

(The President)

In conclusion, in these difficult times, of which we must remain ever mindful, let us endeavour to work together and give the lie to the words of the great French diplomat, Paul Cambon, foreign minister at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, who said that diplomacy is the art of struggling unsuccessfully against the force of things.

I would now like to call on those colleagues on the list of speakers, namely, for today, the representatives of Cuba and Brazil.

The representative of Cuba has the floor.

Mr. MORA GODOY (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and to wish you every success in your efforts to extricate this body from the lamentable stalemate in which it finds itself. I would also like to commend the Ambassador of Finland on the work that he has accomplished during his term in his efforts to change the situation.

Mr. President, the paralysis of this important forum - the only multilateral body with a mandate to negotiate legally binding treaties in the sphere of disarmament and arms control - is most discouraging in the current circumstances, when the very essence of multilateralism is being seriously threatened by the hegemonic unilateral policy of one State which has arrogated to itself the role of master of the world.

To demonstrate this assertion, we need only review certain recent events in which the world's supreme military Power has taken the role of protagonist, namely, the scrapping of the ABM Treaty and progress in the deployment of a new antimissile defence system; the announcement that it will not ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty; the blocking of the process of international negotiations to conclude a protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and the obstruction of the unanimous wish of the States parties to that Convention to continue their multilateral efforts aimed at strengthening it; and, finally, the unprecedented pressure and blackmail used to depose the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, rejecting all methods based on dialogue and cooperation and placing the Organization in a very delicate political situation immediately prior to the Convention's first review conference.

It is paradoxical that now, when the antagonisms that characterized the cold war no longer exist, we should be witnessing such serious setbacks in the sphere of disarmament and international security, setbacks of an order that we did not see even in the years that preceded the 1990s.

The United States has inherited advantageous conditions from the outcome of that period and it would have increased its prestige and respect in the eyes of all the peoples of the world had it favoured and fostered the hopes that arose in the early 1990s, when the total elimination of

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weapons of mass destruction and rapid progress towards the ideal of total and complete disarmament under strict international control were beginning to be seen as achievable goals in a shorter time frame. Those auspicious prospects have now faded and, instead, we have the feeling today that we are in an even worse situation, one characterized by threats, wars, unilateral actions and attempts to modify the approaches that gave rise to the international legal order in the field of disarmament and arms control.

The United States has been quick to produce lists of supposed violators of the international disarmament agreements, using the international campaign against terrorism and the speculative linking of its imaginary sponsors and perpetrators with ambitions to develop or acquire weapons of mass destruction as a pretext to justify the threat of -and the resort to - armed aggression, even going so far as to prepare a list of possible United States "nuclear targets".

In this crusade the United States Government has resorted once again to its mendacious accusation that Cuba is carrying out at least limited offensive work in the research and development of biological warfare and that it has provided dual-use technology to other States, described by the United States as "rogue States".

I will not waste time commenting on the term "rogue", used by the White House apparently to denigrate those countries that do not fall in with its designs. Instead I shall concentrate on the false accusation relating to biological weapons, and I shall do so by quoting verbatim some paragraphs of the statement made by the President of the Councils of State and of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, Dr. Fidel Castro, on 10 May in response to the lies that had been uttered four days earlier by the United States Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Mr. John Bolton. The full text of the statement is to be found in a document that we have requested be circulated at this Conference. Our President said, and I quote:

> "The Acts of Terrorism Act passed by the National Assembly of Cuba stipulates, in its article 10: 'Anyone who manufactures, facilitates, sells, transports, transfers, introduces into the country or keeps in his or her possession, under any form or in any place [...] chemical or biological agents, or any other substance from which any product that fits this description can be derived through research, design or a combination thereof' shall be liable to penalties of between 10 and 30 years privation of liberty, life imprisonment or death.
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> "If Cuban scientists from any of our biotechnology institutes had been cooperating with any country in the development of biological weapons, or had tried to create such weapons on their own initiative they would immediately be hauled before a court of justice on a charge of treason.

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"In an official, public letter, Cuba has written to the Government of the United States to propose three major draft agreements, which are of greater benefit to the United States than to Cuba itself, given the very different magnitude of the problems in each of the two countries. The first is a draft agreement on immigration issues; the second, a draft agreement on cooperation in controlling the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; and the third, a draft bilateral cooperation programme to combat terrorism. We have not received any reply.

"We are urged to cease any biological weapons-related cooperation with 'rogue' States and to comply with all our obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention. Which is the international organization that decides whether or not a country is a 'rogue' State? Precisely which rule of the Biological Weapons Convention has Cuba violated? Is it that, on top of the criminal blockade, they would now ban us from marketing our medicines and using the most beneficial, the most noble products of the talents and hard work of our scientists, they would prevent us from placing these at the service of the health of people anywhere in the world? Or could it be that the United States Government is seeking another bilateral agreement, in addition to those proposed by Cuba, namely, on cooperation in efforts to combat the production of biological weapons? Please propose it. We would be happy to include it in our list of projects under consideration."

On 13 May, a mere few days after the false accusations by Mr. Bolton, the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Colin Powell, had to explain his subordinate's remarks and to reaffirm the real state of affairs, namely, that Cuba does not possess biological weapons.

Furthermore, the former President James Carter, who recently visited my country, stated during his visit to the Cuban Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology that, as part of the preparations for his visit to Cuba, he had held meetings with government institutions in the United States and even with the intelligence agencies and in those meetings - and I quote Mr. Carter - "there were absolutely no such allegations made or questions raised". Then he added, and I quote once again: "I asked them specifically, if there was any evidence that Cuba has been involved in sharing any information to any other country on Earth that could be used for terrorist purposes and the answer from our experts on intelligence was: no."

No further comment is needed. The Government of the United States has lied once again in connection with Cuba and it has been caught red-handed in its lie.

I will only add that the products and technologies of the Cuban biotechnology industry are available now in more than 40 countries. Agreements for technology transfers have been concluded or are currently being negotiated with 13 countries, namely: India, China, Brazil, Egypt, Malaysia, Iran, Russia, South Africa, Tunisia, Algeria, United Kingdom, Venezuela and Mexico, and new trade and production negotiations are under way with 10 countries: Malaysia, Netherlands, Spain, Brazil, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Mexico, Ukraine, Germany and the

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United States (in this last case, to be more precise, negotiations are under way on the use of the Cuban anti-meningitis vaccine and the first steps have been made towards possible clinical trials with the EGF vaccine for lung cancer). All the transfers are governed by a bilateral agreement stipulating that these technologies are to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Cuba goes around the world stating the truth, calling things by their name, but it also acts in a totally responsible manner, on the basis of strict moral and ethical principles. At the present time, when terrorism is one of humankind's main concerns, Cuba has expressed its firm rejection of that scourge and has taken every possible step to combat terrorism, including ratification of the 12 United Nations international treaties to combat terrorism and the adoption of a national anti-terrorism statute that includes severe penal measures.

A country which for years on end has supported and encouraged terrorist actions against Cuba organized from its territory does not have the moral right to level accusations against us: the Government of Cuba has in its possession and has demonstrated to the public irrefutable evidence of these assertions.

Cuba is a small country, a peaceful and hard-working country that represents no military danger to anyone and we reaffirm in this forum that it has no nuclear, chemical or biological weapons, whether good or bad, and that there are no persons in Cuba, whether responsible or irresponsible, who possess such weapons. The total elimination of weapons of mass destruction is the only viable solution to the threat which they represent as potential instruments of terrorist acts.

To achieve that goal, it is imperative to start negotiations on a multilateral legally binding treaty that stipulates their complete prohibition and destruction. Cuba actively supports this objective, which has been rejected by the United States.

It is also imperative to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention with a protocol that includes international transparent and non-discriminatory verification measures. Cuba supports this process and the United States opposes it. The United States has openly stated its reluctance to permit international verification of its biotechnological and pharmaceutical industry and its biological defence programmes, which are the most advanced in the world.

Cuba favours a broad approach in dealing with issues related to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, in opposition to the narrow perceptions that take non-proliferation as their ultimate goal. Cuba considers that this broad approach should also be applied when dealing with the means of delivery of such weapons.

For Cuba, the issue of missiles should be viewed in all its aspects in a balanced and non-discriminatory manner, including the question of international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space. The United Nations has an essential role to play in analysing and resolving the problem of missiles and, for this reason, Cuba has always supported the resolution on this issue which has been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

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The Conference on Disarmament also has an important role to play in the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Year after year, the international community shows its determination to pursue this objective, through the adoption of a resolution on the issue in the United Nations General Assembly. Last year 156 countries voted in favour of that resolution and only 4 abstained, among them the United States.

In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to the extremely disquieting international scenario unfolding before our eyes, with very negative implications for the entire system of multilateral negotiations in the sphere of disarmament and arms control. We cannot remain indifferent to the real possibility that certain hegemonic Powers may act with total impunity and disregard for the will of the vast majority of the world's countries, taking drastic decisions outside multilateral forums and even spreading falsehoods throughout the world. It is the fundamental and collective responsibility of all States and, in particular, the members of this body to call a halt to activities of this kind.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Cuba for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call on the representative of Brazil.

Ms. VALLE PEREIRA (Brazil) (translated from French): Mr. President, at the outset allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as President of the Conference on Disarmament. The delegation of Brazil assures you of its full cooperation in the exercise of your important responsibilities, for under present circumstances yours is indeed a very difficult task and we wish you every success.

I have asked for the floor to provide certain clarifications on the position expressed by the delegation of Brazil during the informal consultations on 23 May 2002, relating to proposals by your predecessor, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Finland, Ambassador Markku Reimaa. At that time, I stated my delegation's support for Ambassador Reimaa's proposal in March 2001 that the Conference should consider the possible launching of work on an informal basis by the four ad hoc committees called for in document CD/1624. The initiative by Ambassador Reimaa was well balanced and did not favour any particular subject allocated to the various ad hoc committees over any other. The balanced nature of this proposal was also assured by the specific reference to document CD/1624, containing a declaration which stresses that the Conference on Disarmament is essentially a negotiating forum with sufficient constructive ambiguity to be able to protect the most diverse interests expressed by these committees in this forum. Although accepted by the Conference as a basis for consultations on the possible adoption of a work programme, the proposal nonetheless became a device for stalling the resumption of work by the Conference.

(Ms. Valle Pereira, Brazil)

It was the observation of this fact that enabled the delegation of Brazil, during these same informal consultations on 23 May, to indicate that it was ready to support the revised version of Ambassador Reimaa's proposal, which had been informally circulated, since it maintained this balance between the four subsidiary bodies. As soon as the formal meeting started, a third version was then circulated introducing significant changes to the two previous proposals and it was with regard to these that my delegation reserved the right to express its position, should the need arise.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Brazil for her statement and for the kinds words addressed to the Chair.

I believe that we have now exhausted the list of speakers. Is there any other delegation that wishes to take the floor? The representative of the United States has the floor.

Mr. McGINNIS (United States of America): Mr. President, I welcome you, my Government welcomes you, in your task, and we look forward to working closely with you and our colleagues during the next four weeks under your presidency.

I was not planning on speaking this morning, but I feel that I need to respond. I regret that our distinguished colleague from Cuba has felt it necessary to engage in a rather inflammatory statement and attack on the United States. In some ways it shows how difficult it is to carry on a dialogue when we use terms such as "lied once again", "a bunch of lies", etc.

I think that we are all here very anxious to get down to work and deal with the issues that face us, and, as we live at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are faced with a world that is very different to that of the preceding century. It is up to us in this body to address threats that concern the security of the international community. In doing so, we do have to deal with the agreements that we have signed up to. From the position of the United States, compliance is extremely important. Those who sign up to an agreement should comply with it fully. The question of universality is also important, but what we want to do is engage in work and achieve a product that will have a result and that will make a difference to improving life and improving security in this planet. And that is extremely important.

Accordingly, one of the comments by our Cuban colleagues about weapons of mass destruction and terrorism is, I believe, well taken. We are very anxious about - and would like this body to deal with - the question of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. This is an issue that faces us. It is not the agenda of 1979. It is the agenda of 2002. So we would look forward to a fruitful, productive discussion on these issues, rather than engaging in political polemics.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States of America for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair.

I now call on the Ambassador of Algeria, followed by the Ambassador of Cuba, who has again asked for the floor.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) (translated from French): Mr. President, I too should like to congratulate you on your election as President of the Conference on Disarmament and to join my personal congratulations to those extended to your predecessor, Ambassador Markku Reimaa, who has clearly done his utmost to engender a working atmosphere and to mobilize all the members of the Conference on Disarmament.

In point of fact I had not prepared a statement this morning. I was intending to speak next week but, having listened to your statement, I believe it contains certain essential pointers to guide us in our collective thinking about the processes under way.

It is very clear that your presidency, Mr. President, is an important one. It is important because, if nothing happens over the next four weeks, the year 2002 will go down in our annals as an empty year, yet another year without work for the Conference on Disarmament. This is something we should already be thinking about.

You are also the representative of a country that forms part of what is customarily called the P5. Thus your responsibilities go somewhat beyond the gathering of views; they also extend to the need to get things rolling again so we can at least get started on the programme of work. This is a particular responsibility of the P5 and one of which its members must be aware. In any event it is up to them to introduce the sort of elements that could help us move forward out of this deadlock.

You yourself have drawn up a balance sheet and given your view of the deadlock in which we find ourselves, while stressing that negotiation and dialogue have become firmly established, even if they have not brought the desired results. We need to deal with the issue of our common heritage, to borrow the formula applied by our Chilean colleague, Juan Enrique Vega. We might say that we are engaged here in a process of conducting our deliberations together, rather than just being next to one another or opposing one another. We need to have this esprit de corps, this positive attitude of dialogue and negotiation, quite simply because - and this needs to be recalled again and again - the Conference on Disarmament is the sole multilateral negotiating forum which the international community was willing to establish.

Where, then, does that leave us today? I believe that there have been elements of progress that have been taken on board by the international community whenever we have had negotiations and dialogue. Need I recall that the NPT has now become universal or very close to universal? Need I recall that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is now a reality? That all the agreements which we have reached on biological and chemical weapons are also a reality? That treaty-based nuclear-free zones in Latin America and Africa are now a reality?

Let us recall too that, generally speaking, the Conference on Disarmament has always followed a positive approach in this process because it has stuck to a code of conduct, and the code of conduct that has prevailed was, first and foremost, the universal nature of nuclear disarmament. I believe we all agree on that: it has been shown in the past and will remain true until the contrary is proved that we need to subordinate our national needs to the will of the international community and to scrutiny by the international community.

(Mr. Dembri, Algeria)

This is the price to be paid if we wish to avoid deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament. This is the price to be paid if we are to combat certain rules of silence. How is it, for example, that until now there has been no organized thinking or clear guidance on the issue of the nuclear potential of Israel? A law of silence has been applied here, a law which is simply unacceptable and intolerable for the international community. Thus, wherever we have respected this principle the international situation has been taken into account in the work of the Conference of Disarmament and has not impeded that work. The situation is clearly quite different today, however. For example, in dealing with terrorism after the events of 11 September we need to apply the rules of universal solidarity and we are doing so.

We are applying those rules with vigour, while recalling that the phenomenon of terrorism has existed for years and that this solidarity has not always been in evidence. I am speaking first of all about my own country, which for some 15 years has been exposed to this phenomenon of terrorism and whose calls have gone unheeded. I could also cite the case of Egypt: everybody recalls the incident at Luxor. Nor should we overlook the countries of the North: thus, in Germany there was the Baader-Meinhof gang and in France Action directe, in Italy the Red Brigades, and in Japan groups whose names, I am sure, the distinguished representative of Japan will know. Thus our reflections on terrorism today must take into account all these elements because, if non-State entities have become a danger in our world and if they are also to get their hands on weapons of mass destruction, they can only do so from States which possess nuclear weapons and not from States that do not. I believe that this too is a reality that needs to be borne in mind in our solidarity against terrorism.

That is why, Mr. President, my delegation wished nonetheless to sound some notes of concern. Since the rules of diplomacy require - as you have said yourself, Mr. President - that at a certain point we should work with constructive ambiguity, I hope that thanks to your consummate skills we may perhaps arrive at some proposals that help us break the deadlock. For the time being, however, we must regard as a cause of concern the fact that the CTBT has not yet come into force and to consider why this is so.

We also need to ascertain whether, if Russia and the United States have agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, this means that we are now facing a qualitatively new approach, namely, a doctrine of deterrence, rather than the destruction and total elimination of nuclear arsenals. Given that these agreements will also now come before the Conference on Disarmament, we must therefore not lose sight of the fact that our objective remains nuclear disarmament and total nuclear disarmament.

We would also like to know why there is talk again of nuclear tests and why we are hearing references to a new generation of nuclear weapons, including mini-nuclear bombs. These are not the handiwork of non-nuclear-weapon States, so they must come from somewhere else: once again we need explanations. In any event we are waiting for clear statements on this issue so that the principles guiding our work can be equally clear. Otherwise it is obvious that this situation will imperil the credibility of the NPT and, with the revision of the nuclear posture,

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the risk of vertical and horizontal proliferation will be reasserted. These, therefore, are causes of concern which we, as non-nuclear States, share and which we clearly wish the Conference on Disarmament to take on board.

Solemn commitments were entered into by the nuclear States at the NPT review conference. In 2002, two years down the road, we are faced - to our great regret - by a clear refusal to move towards the elimination of nuclear arsenals. Why?

We would like to have a reply to this question. And we would also like an explanation for the refusal to conclude a legally binding agreement on the non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States. This is one of the most recent positions expressed in New York and it is a position which leaves us non-nuclear States or States which have renounced nuclear weapons feeling disoriented. For these reasons we seek clear explanations from those countries and we would like to know how their doctrine is expected to evolve, so that we are able today to apply ourselves with vigour and to come up with a programme of work.

These, Mr. President, are a few ideas that I wished to share with you as possible food for thought as you embark on your own presidency. It perhaps goes without saying, once again, that we are looking to the French presidency - that is, to France as a member country of the nuclear club - to provide a contribution which will genuinely move us towards the relaunching of our work.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Algeria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I understand that the Ambassador of Cuba has requested the floor. You have the floor, Sir.

Mr. MORA GODOY (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Thank you, Mr. President. I regret that I have to take the floor again, but since we believe in the validity and the relevance of this forum as the appropriate multilateral forum for addressing matters relating to disarmament and arms control I feel it necessary to refer to the statement which we have just heard from the distinguished representative of the United States.

According to my notes, he asserted that it was difficult to establish cooperation when people came here with inflammatory statements, using words such as "fabrications", "lies", etc.

Mr. President, let us be clear here about who is casting the first stone. The reality is that, on 6 May 2002 - in other words, a mere few days ago - Cuba was accused of developing a biological weapons programme. Do we not even have the right to say that this is a lie? We are told that we made an inflammatory statement. No: it was not an inflammatory statement; all we were doing was stating the truth and if that is seen as justification for not cooperating, for not developing an attitude of decency and good conduct, as Cuba has done on this question of biological weapons, then we are really unable to agree that there is a genuine desire for cooperation on this matter.

(Mr. Mora Godoy, Cuba)

I would merely like to draw attention to something else that I have noted from what has been said, namely, the willingness to cooperate, to embark on a dialogue and to negotiate the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and I believe that "no comma" was added after the word terrorism.

I wonder, therefore, why we cannot start dealing with the question of nuclear disarmament? Let us start with that, an issue which is of concern to the entire world.

We too take note of the statements regarding the possibility of cooperation on these matters and we too are prepared - as of course we have always been - to continue cooperating and working in this Conference on Disarmament and in any other forum, even a bilateral one.

The technology that Cuba is able to transfer in this context is the technology of transparency, of always stating the truth, of decency. This technology is provided entirely free of charge.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Cuba for his statement. Do any other delegations wish to speak at this stage? I see none. In that case, we have completed our work for today. Before adjourning the meeting, however, I would like to remind you that the special coordinator on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, Mr. Kariyawasam, will be holding informal consultations as he did last week, immediately after this plenary. These will be open to all and will relate to the question with which he has been entrusted.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be on Thursday, 6 June 2002, at 10 a.m. and, once again, will be followed by informal open-ended consultations, organized by the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, as the special coordinator on the review of the agenda of the Conference.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.